

Amendments to the Specification

Please replace the abstract with the following amended abstract:

A management method capable of making an accurate decision about a malfunction of the semiconductor manufacturing equipment ~~comprises the steps of~~ includes sampling a plurality of data of at least one parameter under normal operating ~~condition~~ conditions of the semiconductor manufacturing equipment ~~[[(11)]]~~; generating a Mahalanobis space A from a group of sampled data; calculating a Mahalanobis distance ~~[[D²]]~~ from measured values of the parameter under ordinary operating ~~condition~~ conditions of the semiconductor manufacturing equipment ~~[[(11)]]~~; and deciding that a malfunction occurred in the semiconductor manufacturing equipment ~~[[(11)]]~~ when the value of the Mahalanobis distance exceeds a predetermined value.

Kindly amend the specification as follows:

Page 1, between the title and the heading "**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**", insert

--CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This is a continuation application of application Serial No. 10/206,067, filed July 29, 2002, which is a continuation application of application of Serial No. 09/276,804, filed on March 26, 1999, now U.S. Patent No. 6,438,440, which are hereby incorporated by reference in there entirety for all purposes.--